

Verb Agreement with Compound Subjects

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify errors in agreement of verbs with compound subjects
- Correct errors in agreement of verbs with compound subjects

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 35
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 36–37.
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 38.

Teach

1. **Agreement with Compound Subjects:** Point out that compound subjects present some special problems in verb agreement. Distribute the **Lesson Summary** and preview the **Academic Vocabulary**, stressing that **singular** refers to *one*, and **plural**, more than one. Then write the following counter example on the board:

INCORRECT EXAMPLE:

Spring and fall is my favorite seasons.

- Call on a volunteer to identify the compound, or two-part, subject.
 - Ask: Does a compound subject refer to one or more than one thing? (*more than one*) Should the verb that follows a compound subject be singular or plural? (*plural*) Why? (*The verb must agree in number with the subject.*)
 - Have a volunteer correct the error in subject-verb agreement, explaining the correction. (*Spring and fall are my favorite seasons. The compound subject “spring and fall” is plural, so the plural verb “are” should be used.*)
2. **Teaching Agreement with Compound Subjects:** Use the **Lesson Summary** to review the ways students can determine number within a compound subject when they are writing:
 - **Conjunction “and” for a plural subject:** Explain that usually the conjunction *and* in a compound subject means the number is plural. Have volunteers read aloud each sentence in the “Examples,” adding the word “both” before the verb. If the sentence sounds as good with *both* then both subject and verb are plural.
 - **Conjunction “and” for a singular subject:** Review the “Examples.” Stress that a subject such as “captain and star player” refers to a single unified idea, singular in number. Show that adding “both” before the verb does not make sense here. Students should brainstorm examples of “unified pairs,” such as “peanut butter and jelly” that form one unit or one whole idea. (*Sample: gloom and doom, cereal and milk, bread and butter, cake and ice cream, bow and arrow*)
 - **Conjunctions “or” and “nor,” singular or plural:** Review the “Examples.” Have a student volunteer rewrite each with the order of the subject parts reversed. Coach them to choose the verb form that agrees with the number of the nearest subject part. (*Either Teesha’s brothers or Teesha uses the sled. Neither a snowstorm nor winds scare Teesha. Neither the highways nor our road has snow.*)

VERB AGREEMENT WITH COMPOUND SUBJECTS, CONTINUED

3. Guided Practice: Have students to work in pairs to generate additional compound subjects that have one singular part and one plural part. Tell them to write, for each example, only the subject and not the verb. Groups can then trade examples, and complete the sentences, choosing verbs that agree with the listed subjects paying attention to the contractions, the order of the parts, and unified singular ideas vs. separate plural “add ups.” Pairs should check the grammatical number of each subject and verb. Then have the class discuss some completed sentences, checking subject-verb agreement.

QUICK CHECK. Write each sentence on the board. Ask students to explain what is wrong and then correct it.

- In autumn, early mornings and late evenings is sometimes chilly. (*The compound subject joined by and requires a plural verb, but the verb is singular. In autumn, early mornings and late evenings are sometimes chilly.*)
- Either a lacrosse match or baseball games appeals to me in springtime.
- (*The part of the compound subject nearest the verb is plural, but the verb is singular. Either a lacrosse match or baseball games appeal to me in springtime.*)
- Neither the tennis players nor the coach are expecting defeat in the fall season.
- (*The part of the compound subject nearest the verb is singular, but the verb is plural. Neither the tennis players nor the coach is expecting defeat in the fall season.*)

Practice and Apply

Practice activities involving subject-verb agreement appear on pp. 36–37.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level or above-level students.

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. *Either spring or fall is marked by an equinox.*
2. *On the day of an equinox, days and nights are of equal length.*
3. *March and September are the months when equinoxes occur.*
4. *C*
5. *In the Northern Hemisphere, more daylight hours and greater heat occur in summer.*
6. *Hailstorms and the occasional tornado are quite common during summertime.*
7. *Neither a hurricane nor gale-force winds have damaged that weather station.*
8. *C*
9. *C*
10. *Franks and beans makes a good meal before an autumn football game.*

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

1. *The poles and the equator are regions with special weather conditions.*
2. *A short summer and a long winter occur at the North and South Poles.*
3. *C*

VERB AGREEMENT WITH COMPOUND SUBJECTS, CONTINUED

4. *Extremely cold temperatures and darkness prevail during the entire winter.*
5. *Neither the long winter months nor the brief summer appeals to me!*
6. *Either field hockey or soccer is an exciting fall sport.*
7. *Wrestling matches and basketball games are usually held in winter.*
8. *Neither her twin brothers nor Patsy has much free time during the spring.*
9. *That is because the captain and number-one singles player on the tennis team is none other than Patsy.*
10. *In addition, either the twins or Patsy stars on the baseball team.*

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should correctly answer nine out of items 1–10.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should correctly answer at least four out of items 1–5, and four of items 6–10.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Lesson Summary**. Focus on the examples, and relate them to the definitions. Brainstorm one or two new examples with students for each step. Then have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 38.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *Lizards and crocodiles are different types of reptiles.*
2. *Either that book or those magazines include close-up photos of crocodiles.*
3. *C*
4. *Either the tropics or the world's deserts are home for most lizards.*
5. *Neither that gecko nor those iguanas reproduce by bearing live young.*
6. *Either one egg or several eggs are laid by lizard mothers belonging to the species*
7. *Gambella wislizeni.*
8. *Neither Katrina nor her brothers were familiar with this species, commonly known as*
9. *the "leopard lizard."*
10. *Either insects or the occasional small mammal serves as food for these creatures.*
11. *C*
12. *A lizard's small legs and scaly body are two of its most distinctive features.*